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General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

213th Meeting
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New York

Chairman: Mr. Garcia . . . . . (Colombia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

General exchange of views *(continued)*

Mr. Parnohadiningrat (Indonesia): Let me at the outset, Mr. Chairman, say how pleased my delegation is at seeing you preside over our deliberations with your customary skill and vigour. We are happy that this year the Disarmament Commission is chaired by a representative of the Latin and the Caribbean region and of a fraternal country, Colombia, with which Indonesia has always maintained the most cordial and friendly relations. We are confident that under your leadership our work will achieve substantive progress and success. Let me also extend our felicitations to the other members of the Bureau on their election and our gratitude to Ambassador Hoffmann of Germany on his excellent performance in chairing the Commission last year.

My delegation welcomes the inclusion in our agenda of the item on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. The strengthening of those zones that have already come into existence and their creation in areas where they do not exist have now come to occupy a position of pre-eminent importance so that they can contribute towards

> "the ultimate objective of achieving a world entirely free of nuclear weapons" *(resolution S-10/2, para. 61)*

as set forth by the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD I). From the experience gained so far, it is clear that each zone, actual or potential, has its own characteristics, which, despite the common denominators, make each one a unique undertaking. Past endeavours have also shown that the primary objective of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones is to seek the absence of nuclear weapons from various parts of the world; to insulate the zonal States from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; to prevent horizontal as well as vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons, which could pose new and unacceptable threats to the security of States; to contribute to the process of disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament; and to facilitate cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Among the principal elements of zonal arrangements has been their geographical extent, which call for a broad political and legal endorsement of the zone by the countries concerned. The initiative should come from the States involved, and it is worth recalling that it was Indonesia that proposed in 1982 a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia. It has long been self-evident that a nuclear-weapon-free zone can materialize if it is supported by the States of the region with a strong commitment against the possession of nuclear weapons and a firm conviction that their vital security interests would be enhanced and not jeopardized by such participation. Equally, such a zone can be realized if outside Powers can actively promote it by undertaking to respect it in all aspects, and in particular, by committing themselves to its continued effectiveness.

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Elements such as the duration of the agreement, which should be unlimited; provisions governing the sea, which should be determined in accordance with the principles of international law, particularly the Convention on the Law of the Sea; and its relationship to other international agreements on arms limitation and disarmament should be included in the zonal arrangement.

In South-East Asia, the Bangkok Treaty has proscribed the development, manufacture, acquisition, possession or control of nuclear weapons. Its signatories have also undertaken to utilize nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes and under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. Thus, with the conclusion of treaties on nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia and Africa, along with the Antarctic, Rarotonga and Tlatelolco Treaties, a large segment of the Southern Hemisphere has become, or will soon become, free from the nuclear menace. Taken together, they represent a comprehensive edifice to ensure that the nuclear non-proliferation regime will be further strengthened. While the basic obligations of these Treaties emanate from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), others have been incorporated in accordance with the particular needs of the regions, which call for a pragmatic and flexible approach.

While we remain cautiously optimistic about the expansion of nuclear-weapon-free zones to cover the Southern Hemisphere, we believe that intensive and sustained efforts should be made to overcome obstacles to elicit the participation and support of both the regional and external States. In conflict-ridden regions, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, though infinitely more difficult, would be particularly desirable. The nuclear-weapon threat can be effectively eliminated on the basis of legally binding arrangements for nuclear-weapon-free zones, leading to a denuclearized world and to nuclear disarmament. Meanwhile, the security of zonal States and the integrity of the zonal regimes must be ensured and maintained.

The convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) is long overdue. Some objective factors have contributed to this conclusion.

First, the end of the cold war and the beginning of genuine arms controls and reductions did not render the cause of disarmament obsolete. On the contrary, the new conditions of international security reinforce the relevance of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction through the conclusion of new bilateral and multilateral agreements that would establish and codify security as lower levels of armaments.

Secondly, with the changed and changing international situation, disarmament has become a critical component in the pursuit of overall international security and is being expanded and enriched. It now entails even deeper reductions in armaments, especially in its nuclear dimension. It also covers an increasingly broad spectrum of issues such as the production, stockpiling and transfer of military equipment and technology, confidence-building and transparency measures and verification.

Thirdly, the importance of convening SSOD IV cannot be overemphasized, considering the fact that though nearly a decade has elapsed since SSOD III, the international community continues to be burdened by the persistence of overarmaments and its attendant consequences.

The international community now has an unique opportunity to achieve significant progress in disarmament, reflecting the wishes of the vast majority of Member States. This calls for a fundamental reorientation in our approaches to disarmament. Unilateral policies and partial measures may have been adequate in the past, but the multidimensional nature of the problems facing us call for a collective approach. The resurgence of the United Nations and the renewed trust in its capacity to act effectively makes it obligatory on the part of Member States to mobilize the necessary political will and to utilize the Organization more effectively to sustain the disarmament process and to strengthen international security. The convening of SSOD IV in 1999, after adequate preparation, has now become imperative.

As regards item 6 of our agenda, my delegation's observations must necessarily be preliminary, as it is a new issue which calls for close and serious scrutiny. The contemporary significance of practical disarmament measures in the context of conflicts is fully demonstrated by the proliferation of light weapons, which have killed or maimed hundreds of thousands of people. These weapons, which constitute the bulk of world trade in these armaments, have consumed an unconscionable amount of the resources of developing nations, which can least afford to divert their limited resources. Further compounding the situation are the difficulties involved in monitoring the cross-border flow of arms into countries that are at war or within their own borders and the proliferation of anti-personnel mines, which has received

belated attention only in recent years. These increasingly dangerous situations have undermined prospects for socio-economic progress and threaten long-term peace and stability.

The task ahead seems formidable. It involves setting up, among other things, a framework of sustainable confidence-building and arms-restraint measures in order to prevent further turmoil, violence and instability in the post-conflict era. It calls for the implementation of a disarmament programme under the auspices of the United Nations and regional organizations to control the proliferation of weapons, to prevent illicit arms acquisitions and to demobilize and reintegrate combatants, leading to the creation of new and unified armed forces. These and other efforts would have to be coordinated in an integrated approach by the Member States involved as well as by regional and subregional organizations to ensure security and stability, and to rebuild societies and put them back on the path of peace and development. These complex issues need to be examined at the highest political level in order to evolve a concrete plan of action. We commend the non-paper circulated by Germany, which touches on many of these aspects and offers useful insights.

Mr. Sha Zukang (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): First of all, I would like to congratulating you warmly, Sir, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its current session. I am convinced that, with your wisdom and diplomatic skill, you will guide the session to a success. You and the other members of the Bureau can count on the full cooperation of the Chinese delegation. I wish to avail myself of this opportunity also to thank the Chairman of the last session, Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann, for his contribution to the work of that session.

At present, the overall international situation continues to grow more relaxed. International relations are undergoing drastic adjustments, and the transition towards multi-polarity has accelerated. The pursuit of peace, stability, cooperation and development has become the general trend of the times and the common aspiration of all peoples. However, there are still many destabilizing and uncertain elements affecting the international situation. It is especially noteworthy that after the end of the military confrontation between the Eastern and Western blocs, some countries still adhere to the cold-war mentality. These countries are bent on strengthening their military alliances, expanding military blocs, building up armaments and interfering with the internal affairs of other countries. Moreover, some regions continue to suffer from turbulence and conflicts, and the situation in some hot spots is deteriorating. All of this shows that today's world is far from tranquil, and that it is an arduous job to maintain peace and promote development. Under such circumstances, we are facing both opportunities and challenges in the field of international arms control and disarmament.

Against this backdrop, some significant developments have occurred in the field of arms control and disarmament since the last session of the Disarmament Commission. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has been concluded, giving a strong impetus to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The Chemical Weapons Convention will enter into force this month. If by that time, the two declared chemical-weapon States ratify the Convention, a whole category of weapons of mass destruction will be banned forever. The parties concerned are making efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention. Steady progress is being achieved in other areas of disarmament. Meanwhile, the international community is exploring ways and means to further advance the cause of disarmament. As an important multilateral deliberative organ on disarmament, the Disarmament Commission has for many years played a significant role in the formulation of guiding principles for disarmament. It is our hope that the Commission will be able to make new contributions to disarmament by adapting to the changed international situation. China has always attached importance to the work of the Disarmament Commission. We have participated in and made our contributions to every session. The three items to be considered at the current session are of common concern to all delegations; the outcome will have an important impact on the process of international disarmament.

The fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament is one of the three items to which all delegations attach importance. As a matter of fact, the three previous special sessions on disarmament, and especially the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, have played a positive role in guiding and promoting international disarmament. Since the adoption of the Final Document, nearly 20 years have passed, during which the international situation has undergone major changes. Thanks to the joint efforts of the international community, significant progress has been made in the field of multilateral arms control and disarmament. The Chinese delegation believes that under these new circumstances, following

the end of the cold war and as we approach the turn of the century, it is obviously necessary to convene a fourth special session to reaffirm and formulate principles and objectives for international arms control and disarmament in the twenty-first century. In this regard, many countries, including China, have put forward reasonable proposals and initiatives on disarmament in recent years. Convening a fourth special session to discuss these proposals and initiatives in depth will therefore be of practical significance. We hope that the current session will be able to work out, after a full exchange of views, and by consensus, a comprehensive agenda for the special session, covering all areas of disarmament.

As for the item on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, the Chinese delegation is pleased to note that the significance of nuclear-weapon-free zones in facilitating nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation has been widely recognized by the international community. Efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones have been intensified, and the area covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones has further expanded. The conclusion of the Treaties of Pelindaba and Bangkok, in addition to the Treaties of Tlatelolco and Rarotonga, has made virtually all countries in the southern hemisphere free of nuclear weapons. Countries in the Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia and Central Europe are making efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in their respective regions, thus further strengthening such momentum.

Against this backdrop, the Chinese delegation is of the view that the Disarmament Commission should consider this item in depth, summarizing experiences and lessons of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones, and formulating guiding principles for the establishment of additional nuclear-weapon-free zones, concerning in particular the geographical demarcation of the zones and their relationship with existing international law. This will be conducive to the consolidation of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and to the establishment of new ones, as well as to the promotion of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

China has always respected and supported the efforts of non-nuclear-weapon States to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements that are freely arrived at and that reflect the actual conditions of the regions concerned. China has undertaken unconditionally the commitment not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or in nuclear-weapon-free zones. We maintain that all nuclear-weapon States should respect the status of nuclear-weapon-free zones and undertake similar obligations. Proceeding from this position, the Chinese Government has signed and ratified relevant protocols to the Treaties of Tlatelolco and Rarotonga, and has signed relevant protocols to the Treaty of Pelindaba. We support the efforts of the South-East Asian countries to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and wish to work with the countries concerned to resolve the issue of geographical demarcation and other pending issues at an early date so as to facilitate China's signing of the relevant protocols.

The current session will also consider an item entitled "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N". When we agreed to the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the Disarmament Commission, it was our understanding that the scope of the item remained to be discussed and defined. As is known to all, conventional arms control and disarmament are very complicated questions. Since conditions vary from country to country and from region to region, it is hard to formulate universally applicable guidelines and measures. Furthermore, the nature and substance of consolidating peace in conflict regions are far beyond the scope of conventional arms control and disarmament. Therefore, it is difficult to consider these two complicated issues together. The Chinese delegation maintains that our deliberations on this item should be confined to the consolidation of peace through conventional arms control and disarmament in regions that have suffered from conflicts.

The Chinese delegation believes that it is necessary and in the interest of the countries and regions concerned to maintain and consolidate peace and security through practical arms control and disarmament measures. We are of the view that regional conflicts have differing origins, and that therefore their settlement requires differing guidelines and measures. Conventional arms control and disarmament can play only a limited role in resolving conflicts and maintaining peace in the regions concerned. As a general principle, the Chinese delegation believes that in order to restore and consolidate peace in conflict regions, the first and foremost task is to abide by the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter, as well as the five principles of peaceful coexistence. Powers outside of the regions concerned and with significant influence on them should assume special responsibility for resolving conflicts, promoting arms control and disarmament, and restoring and consolidating peace in these regions.

The Chinese delegation will put forward its views on specific guidelines and measures in the course of the Commission's deliberations.

Mr. Jele (South Africa): Congratulations, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of this session of the Disarmament Commission. Please be assured that my delegation will work with you to ensure the success of our deliberations.

The South African Government firmly believes that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the world is a clear reflection of the continued commitment of non-nuclear-weapon States to the goal of ridding the world of nuclear weapons. It is our conviction that the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba will serve to strengthen the international non-proliferation regime and encourage the establishment of additional nuclear-weapon-free zones in other parts of the world.

We in Africa are particularly proud of the establishment of the African nuclear-weapon-free zone — the treaty of which is named after a site in South Africa. The Treaty of Pelindaba, which was an ideal since the 1960s, has been signed by 45 African States, and the relevant protocols have been signed by all of the nuclear-weapon States. We use this opportunity to call again on the only remaining State which has territory within the zone, and which has not yet done so, to sign the Treaty protocol which applies to it as soon as possible.

South Africa also welcomes the recent initiative of the States of Central Asia to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in their region. The Almaty Declaration, in which Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan endorsed the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, should be recognized and encouraged — as should the forthcoming international conference on that initiative, which is being held in Tashkent during September of this year to determine the strategy for achieving this nuclear-weapon-free zone. My Government also renews its call for the establishment of further nuclear-weapon-free zones in regions where they do not exist, such as the Middle East and South Asia.

At the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the States parties to the Treaty reached general agreement on a number of points. Among these, the parties to the Treaty welcomed the steps taken since 1995 to conclude further nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties and reaffirmed their conviction that the establishment of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones freely arrived at among the States concerned enhances global and regional peace and security. The parties recognized the importance attached by signatories and States parties to the treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok to establishing a mechanism for cooperation among the respective treaty agencies.

A setback for the cause of nuclear-weapon-free zones was the disappointing vote on the resolution on "The nuclear-weapon-free Southern Hemisphere and adjacent areas" at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. South Africa will continue to work to achieve consensus on this important resolution.

On the subject of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, it will be recalled that the Non-Aligned Movement provided a constructive non-paper which has given impetus to consideration of the issue. South Africa recalls the decision of the General Assembly, resolution 51/45 C, to convene a special session in 1999 subject to the emergence of a consensus on its objectives and agenda, and to convene a meeting of the Preparatory Committee before the end of the fifty-first session of the Assembly, subject to the outcome of the deliberations concerning the special session at this session of the Disarmament Commission.

As was the case last year, South Africa will continue at this session to play a constructive role in the firm conviction that consensus on the objectives of the special session on Disarmament is essential to the convening of such a session. It is imperative that during this session of the Committee, all delegations should work constructively and flexibly to reach mutual agreement on the objectives and agenda of the special session. South Africa for its part intends to strive to achieve this goal.

It is not just the threat that is constituted by all weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery that is of serious concern to my Government, but also the build-up of conventional weapons beyond a level which can be considered legitimate for the purposes of self-defence. We were therefore gratified at the agreement reached at the 1996 session of the Disarmament Commission on guidelines for international arms transfers. Conventional weapons are the source of most of the death and suffering caused in conflicts around the world today, and it is thus our hope that in all

disarmament forums a greater emphasis will be placed on conventional armaments. The rebuilding and prosperity of society which is gained from various peace and democratization initiatives is curtailed by the accompanying proliferation of these arms and light weapons.

My Government is very concerned about the proliferation of and illicit trafficking in conventional arms. It is these weapons which are being used to create devastation in many areas around the world. To address these concerns the South African cabinet approved a new conventional arms control policy on 30 August 1995.

This policy took into account the findings of a judicial Commission of Enquiry — the Cameron Commission — on South Africa's arms-trade policy and the practice current at the time of its appointment.

The policy, which has been approved by the Cabinet, makes provision for a ministerial controlling committee — the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC) — which has the controlling function. There is also provision for an independent inspectorate and parliamentary checks and balances. This procedure and structure ensure that the authority over arms-trade and transfer policies is vested in the collective ministerial leadership of the NCACC, which is accountable to the Cabinet.

In developing this policy, a number of factors were given emphasis, such as the fact that the reduction of world military expenditures could have a significant positive impact on the social and economic development of all peoples; that all sovereign countries have the inherent right of self-defence in terms of the Charter of the United Nations; and that any transferred arms are not used in violation of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. Besides these factors, a number of political, technical, social, humanitarian and economic components were also factored into our approach to conventional arms controls so as to ensure that due restraint is exercised in the transfer of arms and related technologies.

My delegation will be circulating a paper in Working Group III on agenda item 6 — that is, the Working Group on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament — which will provide further details on the South African government policy on and approach to conventional arms control.

Mr. Pérez-Otermin (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to congratulate you; Sir, on Colombia's chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at this session. Let me also extend Uruguay's pledge of cooperation in your endeavours.

We believe that the region has once again shown its spirit of service to the cause of disarmament and we commend the honourable attitude of the delegations of Ecuador and Peru in bringing this about. We also extend our recognition to the other members of the Bureau. Likewise, we commend the substantive contributions made in 1996 by the German chairmanship of this Commission.

As a member country of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone created by the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which celebrated its thirtieth anniversary on 14 February, Uruguay attaches the greatest importance to the establishment of these arrangements freely arrived at among States of the various regions. Accordingly, we must also convey our appreciation to those States that are continuously strengthening their relations with the nuclear-weapon-free zones. Of the essence in this respect is the realistic position assumed, in particular the provision of security assurances to States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) that, like Uruguay, do not possess a nuclear capacity nor pose a nuclear threat.

The initiatives to establish cooperation agreements between the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones can count on our enthusiastic support. In that regard the exchange of experience will be very beneficial, bearing in mind that the area covered by these zones in the southern and northern hemispheres is growing increasingly larger.

The international seminar on nuclear-weapon-free zones in the next century, held in Mexico on 13 and 14 February 1997 to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, proved to be extremely useful in broadening the experience thus far acquired. In this regard, we also support Brazil's efforts towards consolidating the nuclear-weapon-free-zone regime encompassed by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba and the Antarctic.

The prevailing situation with regard to disarmament is quite different from that which we faced during the cold war. However, the overall picture is far from ideal. While the nuclear Powers are striving to adopt measures

to dismantle their destructive capacity, the danger presented by the transport of nuclear waste is gradually increasing. Uruguay believes that the nuclear-weapon States should acknowledge the threat posed by the transport of their nuclear waste by sea and sees fit vigorously to reaffirm that this international responsibility must be carried out in such a way that the environment and coastal States are not threatened. If it is not, we will be jeopardizing the progress achieved through the signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the indefinite extension of the NPT, the Chemical Weapon Convention, the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, and the other achievements made in the field of disarmament in recent months.

For Uruguay, this subject deserves special consideration in all forums, and particularly at the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. This will be the fourth opportunity for the General Assembly to give concrete recommendations to prevent ongoing threats to international security from enduring into the next century. We hope that the efforts brought to bear here will achieve the results demanded by our times and that substantial contributions will be made to international security, which has yet to find appropriate solutions in the sphere of global disarmament.

My country has supported most of the initiatives emanating from the First Committee and is prepared to continue in these endeavours. We follow a policy of principles that we have tried always to demonstrate as occasion permitted. Of all those occasions — while not wishing to exclude any — we wish especially to highlight the efforts of the German delegation on the guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N, of which we are a sponsor, contained in document A/CN.10/194 of 21 April 1997.

Uruguay urges the adoption of a convention against the production, trafficking, sale and illicit transfer of firearms, ammunition, explosives and other materials. In this regard, it is our hope that the consideration of a draft convention that began in Cancún will reach speedy fruition.

Uruguay believes that the illicit trafficking of light weapons has an important destabilizing effect on States, because they are unequivocally destined for use in criminal activities. National mechanisms for control of the production and marketing of light weapons, and the elimination of illicit trafficking, need to be harmonized at the international level with a view to achieving effective financial control without duplication of procedures and needless bureaucratization.

We are sure that these and other considerations will be reflected in the Commission's report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

Mr. De Icaza (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to offer you, Sir, the warm congratulations of the delegation of Mexico upon your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission, and to add that I am especially pleased from a personal point of view. We are familiar with your negotiating skills, which will certainly help us in our work. We should also like to congratulate the Vice-Chairmen and the Chairmen of the working groups. We also congratulate Ambassador Hoffmann on his leadership of the Commission last year.

This year, not only will the Commission have a normal work period — in contrast with the past two years — but it will be considering three issues, two of which are new: the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, and guidelines on conventional arms in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N.

As the General Assembly stated in 1978, nuclear-weapon-free zones are important disarmament measures and their establishment in various parts of the world should be encouraged as a step towards the achievement of a world completely free of nuclear weapons. Through the Treaty of Tlatelolco, whose thirtieth anniversary is being celebrated this year, the treaties of Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba, and the Antarctic Treaty, the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas covered by these treaties are rapidly becoming free of nuclear weapons, as the General Assembly recognized with satisfaction last autumn.

The proliferation of denuclearized zones proves that it is possible to free the Earth from the dangers arising from the mere existence of nuclear weapons. These zones are not an end in themselves: they represent the fulfilment by the States concerned of the obligation of every State to contribute to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. It is important to conceive and establish mechanisms for cooperation between the various zones as part of the effort to consolidate the respective systems established by each treaty. This cooperation could stimulate the creation of new zones, an important process

for the gradual liberation of the world on a geographical basis, and one of particular interest in regions that are politically and militarily sensitive.

Although each treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone has its own characteristics based on its specific geography, all have common traits, the enumeration of which could help in the establishment of additional zones. The first element shared by the existing treaties is the idea that the renunciation of the nuclear option must be the result of freely contracted agreements between the States in the relevant nuclear-weapon-free zone. The second element is that the treaty in question should guarantee that its corresponding zone be genuinely free of nuclear weapons. The third element is that States possessing nuclear weapons must strictly respect the status of the zones. The fourth element is that those nuclear-weapon States must refrain from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against the States of the zones.

In considering this issue at the present session of the Disarmament Commission, we should both encourage the establishment of new zones and examine the relationships and mechanisms for cooperation that could be established among the existing ones.

The second new issue that we will be considering at this session is that of the guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace. Our first task should be to determine the scope of the subject with respect both to the cases in which the guidelines could or should be applied, to and the nature of those guidelines. General Assembly resolution 51/45 N stresses the importance of practical measures relating to the maintenance and consolidation of peace and security in areas that have suffered from a conflict in which the United Nations was involved, and refers to disarmament measures and others that do not strictly relate to disarmament. We will have the task of filling in the details to this concept.

The working group on this issue should review the degree of application of the "Guidelines for international arms transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991", adopted by this Commission during its substantive session last year.

Mexico believes that there are great opportunities for conventional disarmament in the regional context. That is why, at Mexico's suggestion, the Rio Group agreed to negotiate a convention against the manufacture of and illicit traffic in fire arms, munitions, explosives and other related materials. A draft convention is currently under submission for consideration by a working group of the Organization of American States. The importance of this initiative lies in the fact that, once it has been adopted by the relevant bodies, the document will be legally binding. We hope that its implementation in the region will help effectively to prevent and suppress the illegal transfer of weapons and that in the future it will serve as a model for the adoption of similar instruments in other regions or at the international level.

The main task of this substantive session is to achieve a consensus on convening the preparatory committee of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament before the end of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/75 I, the fourth special session will be held in 1999. We believe that this is important if we are to establish the disarmament agenda for the next century. We will actively participate in the appropriate working group. I should like to say at this point in the general exchange of views that my delegation believes, that in seeking the balance that we must and can achieve in order to reach consensus with respect to weapons of mass destruction, conventional weaponry and institutional mechanisms, we must not lose sight of the priority that the international community attaches to the full prohibition of weapons that jeopardize the very existence of mankind.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): It gives me particular pleasure to see the representative of Colombia, Ambassador Andelfo García, presiding over the work of the Disarmament Commission. I should like, on this occasion, to offer you, Sir, my warmest congratulations and sincere wishes for success in your difficult task. I should also like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the members of the Bureau and to assure them of the full support of my delegation, and to express our great appreciation to His Excellency Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann for his remarkable work at the head of the Commission during the previous session.

The overall political climate that characterizes international relations, as well as the prospects opened up by the results achieved by the First Committee and by the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, have in recent months confirmed our feeling that a new dynamic seems to have developed in favour of continuing the work of

disarmament and of strengthening international peace and security. This has happened at a time when difficulties continue with regard to agreement on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, a fact which represents a serious source of concern for all of us.

It is thus with measured optimism that my delegation views the present session of the Commission. It is with an open spirit that it would like to make its contribution to these proceedings. In this regard, I would like to stress that the Disarmament Commission has in recent years taken on growing importance. It remains, in fact, the only place where Member States have an opportunity to deliberate on the crucial problems of security and disarmament and to formulate guidelines on the means to consider them. We should therefore benefit as much as possible from the Commission's great potential, demonstrated during the 1996 session when the Commission achieved agreement on the controversial question of international arms transfers. In this regard, member countries — particularly arms-producing countries — should strive to implement the guidelines and recommendations aimed at keeping international arms transfers from supporting terrorist networks, groups and organizations whose sole objective is to foment violent destabilization against States. They should especially strive to implement their mission to protect persons and property.

We consider the three substantive items on the agenda of this session of great importance. We believe that Working Group I on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which is considering the question for the second consecutive year, should step up its efforts to achieve an agreement on the special session's objectives and agenda during this session, in accordance with the decision of paragraph 1 of resolution 51/45 C. This should be done with a view to convening the session in 1999. It will thus be possible to take advantage of this opportunity to reexamine the question of the programme of comprehensive disarmament and the structure set out in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978, in the light of developments since that session. We believe that, following the constructive debate during the last session, everything possible should be done to achieve substantial progress on this question. My delegation remains ready to contribute to this effort.

Working Group II will consider the issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of agreements freely entered into among the States of the region concerned. My country — which has always supported the promotion of nuclear-weapon-free zones, especially in Africa and in the Middle East — believes that there is now a consensus view that the establishment of these zones is conducive to strengthening regional peace and security. It is therefore appropriate, at least during this first year, to go into greater depth in our consideration of the guidelines established to contribute substantially to the maintenance of international peace and security and the disarmament process, as no less than 100 countries are now bound by commitments made in the context of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The Treaties of Pelindaba and Bangkok have joined those of Rarotonga and Tlatelolco — the thirtieth anniversary of which took place several weeks ago — thus increasing further the number of nuclear-weapon-free zones and making more concrete the long-cherished dream of a world free of all nuclear arms.

Finally, Working Group III will consider the question of "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitations and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N". There is no need for my delegation to address again a resolution regarding the end of conflicts and the consolidation of peace, which gave it some difficulty and which should be considered elsewhere than in the First Committee. However, my delegation will participate in the debate, as it has always done, and will contribute without preconditions and in a constructive spirit.

Algeria resolutely favours disarmament and attaches great importance to it. Its expenditures on national defence have been kept to a notably low percentage of its gross national product, a percentage well below that of countries of comparable size and resources. In the nuclear field, Algeria has voluntarily submitted its two research and isotope-producing reactors to the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

My country wanted to make a major political contribution to strengthening the cause of disarmament — whose final objective is to bring about a culture where the military uses of the atom will be obsolete — by signing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in October 1996 and by acceding to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in January 1995. In like manner, and along with other delegations, Algeria presented the programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons to the Conference on

Disarmament in Geneva and called for a halt to the production of fissile materials for military use, in order to give the nuclear disarmament process real content and primary importance.

These are some preliminary comments which I would like to share at this stage. Of course, my delegation reserves the right to revisit the items on the agenda of the current session in greater length.

Mr. Babar (Pakistan): Allow me, at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as the Chairman of this year's substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. Your election is a recognition of your diplomatic skills and expertise in the field of disarmament. I would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Ambassador Hoffmann of Germany for successfully steering the work of the Commission last year.

Some notable developments have taken place in the field of international security and disarmament over the last year. These include the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice regarding the existence of an obligation to initiate and conclude negotiations on the elimination of nuclear weapons, the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the strengthening of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, and the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free-zone in Africa.

Despite these important developments, the goal of attaining global security has not been achieved owing to the continued existence of weapons of mass destruction. Twenty-eight members of the Group of 21 have proposed a programme for the phased elimination of nuclear weapons in order to realize the widely-shared goal of nuclear disarmament. We believe that this programme can serve as the basis for negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

We hope that the Conference on Disarmament will also start negotiations on extending negative security assurances to all non-nuclear-weapon States. Regrettably, proposals are being made to restrict such assurances to States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) or other non-proliferation regimes. This is contrary to the basic United Nations Charter principle of the sovereign equality of States.

The Disarmament Commission, after a gap of many years, will meet this year for the normal duration of three weeks. We hope that this will enable the Commission not only to accomplish fully the goals set by the Programme of Action adopted at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, but also to respond to the new challenges.

The United Nations has a central role to play in the field of disarmament. To discharge its functions effectively, it needs a clear plan of action. There is already agreement in principle that a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament should be convened to plan the future course of action. We hope that the Commission will be able to build consensus on the dates and on an outline of the agenda of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We also hope that the Commission will make concrete recommendations regarding dates for the first session of the Preparatory Committee of the fourth special session on disarmament.

The proliferation of nuclear weapons is one of the most serious threats to regional and global security today. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones has proven to be an effective measure in curbing this menace. The efficacy of this approach has been unquestionably validated by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok. Consolidation of these regimes will eventually make the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas free of nuclear weapons. The next session of the General Assembly should endeavour to achieve consensus on a proposal to consolidate these treaties.

In spite of these encouraging developments in various parts of the world, Pakistan's proposal to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia, despite having been endorsed by the General Assembly for the last many years, has not materialized. The United Nations guideline on the establishment of such zones — on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned — has been invoked even to block the process of negotiations on this proposal. We hope that the Commission will make concrete recommendations to facilitate the initiation of the process of negotiations on the establishment of such a zone.

In the post-cold-war era, most threats to peace and security arise from regional conflicts. Efforts should be made to resolve outstanding disputes in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. While the United Nations should primarily focus on removing the causes of

such conflicts, measures to control conventional arms at the regional and subregional levels should also be evolved in order to promote regional and international peace and security.

One of the items on the Commission's agenda this year deals with post-conflict disarmament measures. While Pakistan supports such efforts, it believes that the United Nations should also take preventive measures to contain arms buildups in areas of potential conflict. In this regard, principles should be formulated that can serve as a framework for agreements on conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels. As enunciated in General Assembly resolution 51/45 Q, the Conference on Disarmament provides an appropriate forum for evolving such principles.

The reduction in global tension has not automatically translated into a reduction of tension in various regions of the world, and this will not happen unless efforts are made to take advantage of the rare window of opportunity offered by the end of the cold war. The international community must surely recognize that a solution to the security problems of South Asia is indispensable for the success of the global endeavours towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

We hope that the Disarmament Commission will be able to achieve concrete results this year. Our efforts can add effective guidelines to the list of the initiatives undertaken to achieve regional and global disarmament. Pakistan, as always, will participate actively and constructively in the deliberations of the Commission.

Ms. Ghose (India): I would like to join previous speakers, Sir, in expressing to you the congratulations of the Indian delegation on your unanimous election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at this session. We are particularly pleased as we have experience of your diplomatic skills and experience, which we feel will be necessary to guide the deliberations of this body. Our congratulations are also extended to other members of the Bureau.

I would like, in particular, to recall the leadership skills of Ambassador Hoffmann who, as your predecessor, was able to ensure that this Commission could produce concrete results through a consensual approach. I hope the delegation of Germany will forward the good wishes of my delegation together with those of others to Ambassador Hoffmann.

As a universal deliberative organ of the international disarmament machinery, the Disarmament Commission provides us with a forum in which we can identify and examine ways of enhancing and promoting the international disarmament agenda. At the moment, this agenda, in our view, seems to have reached a stage where it is necessary for us to examine not only items but also approaches to disarmament. History has taught us that security based on excessive accumulation of arms has been unstable. Nor has peace based on unjust, discriminatory rules and principles been anything but precarious. Durable peace and action in the field of disarmament can be successful only if there is a willingness to take into account the security interests of all States, if there is flexibility in approach and a willingness to address, on an equal basis, the problems which face the entire international community. The difficulty with which we were able to agree on our current agenda should give us pause for thought. Are we in fact addressing the problems which are of concern to all of us or are we merely trying to find items to promote one particular approach towards international peace and security?

Last year, the General Assembly decided that the time had come for us to start preparing for a special session on disarmament, to examine where we are, what we have achieved and where we intend to go. It reiterated its conviction that a special session could set a future course of action in the field of disarmament, arms control and related international security matters, taking advantage of a climate which has recently seen

> "positive changes in the international landscape, characterized by the end of the cold war, the relaxation of tensions at the global level and the emergence of a new spirit governing the relations among nations". (*General Assembly resolution 51/45 C, fourth preambular para.*)

The working paper presented by the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission last year also recognized the timeliness of such a special session.

If I may quote from that text:

> "For an agreed, positive and forward-looking disarmament programme to be adopted, there is a need to draw lessons from past endeavours and preserve and build upon the positive achievements of the first special session; there will also be a need to take stock of some fundamental changes, and to

identify new problems and ways and means to solve them, with a view to arriving at a mutually agreed programme of action for the future. For such an exercise to be comprehensive, all issues pertaining to disarmament and international security, including the disarmament machinery, will have to be addressed." *(A/51/42, annex II, para. 2)*

This would appear to us to be a sensible approach.

At that session, the non-aligned countries presented a working paper containing preliminary views on the objectives and agenda of the next special session. A number of indicative, substantive issues were also included in the working paper. These, along with other papers which were presented, could, we feel, form a good basis for our work this year on this topic. We share the view that it is of prime importance to ensure that the fourth special session devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) not fail. For this, consensus on the objectives and agenda of SSOD IV, and thorough preparation, through a well-structured Preparatory Committee process, are essential.

With other Non-Aligned Movement countries, India believes that SSOD IV needs to address the issue of nuclear disarmament as a priority. A review of measures to eliminate other weapons of mass destruction would also be necessary, as would an examination of measures relating to conventional weapons.

We seem to have progressed somewhat in our efforts to eliminate two of the weapons of mass destruction: the Chemical Weapons Convention will enter into force in a few days' time, and we expect that serious work will start shortly on a protocol to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention. India has signed and ratified both these Conventions. Yet we are acutely conscious that neither of them is universal. Non-universality of conventions which eliminate an entire class of weapons will always give rise to security apprehensions, not only among the States parties to the conventions, but also is likely to have an impact on the international security situation at large. This problem becomes particularly acute when those countries which possess these weapons do not join the conventions. We believe that the special session devoted to disarmament will need to review the status and implementation of both these Conventions to ensure that the interests of international peace and security are in fact protected by these multilaterally negotiated instruments.

With these two Conventions signed and ratified and, hopefully, implemented effectively, our attention at the SSOD will have to necessarily focus on the third and most recalcitrant of areas — a convention on the elimination of nuclear weapons.

India's position on this matter has been clear and unequivocal. Just as we have been among the first to join and strengthen the other two Conventions, we would be in the forefront of negotiating and accepting the obligations of a nuclear weapons convention. In response to our insistence that we start negotiations on the elimination of nuclear weapons on an urgent basis, a position dismissed as a "pious intonation" or a manipulative move, we have been asked what we would bring to the table. Let me take this opportunity to underline that India has, while not accepting unequal and misleading treaties, unilaterally imposed restraints upon itself, both in terms of transfers of technology and, more important, in terms of weaponization of our capabilities. If I might draw the attention of our interlocutors on this subject to India's own proposal, made in 1988 at the last special session devoted to disarmament, a balance, indeed a bargain, was clearly spelt out between the obligations of those who have weapons which threaten us and international security, and the obligations of those who do not. A nuclear weapons convention would impose non-discriminatory obligations on all countries; the objective would be a nuclear-weapon-free world.

It is the stubborn position of some of the nuclear-weapon States which has today paralysed the debate on nuclear disarmament. We believe that the time has come for us to recognize that the window of opportunity which was opened after the end of the cold war may be rapidly closing. The responsibility of this missed opportunity will be on those who refuse to come to terms with the changed circumstances; who continue to believe that only their security concerns, safeguarded by their nuclear weapons, are valid, and that the security of other countries is secondary; and who ignore the calls from all parts of the international community for urgent action towards the commencement of negotiations for the elimination of nuclear weapons. We need to unblock this impasse: the mechanisms are available, and proposals on the way ahead abound. This cannot but be an issue which we should address when discussing the agenda of SSOD IV.

As I have already stated, we believe that the special session should also look at steps to regulate conventional weapons with a view to curbing irresponsible transfers, excessive production and development and the build-up of conventional weapons beyond the legitimate

requirements of States. We believe that SSOD IV could come up with a programme for the regulation of conventional weapons. We already have some patches of consensus in this area, and we have no doubt that in the preparatory process others could be identified. We have, for example, a consensus on the approach to illicit transfers of conventional arms, and we have a consensus on certain conventional weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects. We are also examining the role of small arms and the mechanisms for improved transparency in conventional arms transfers.

We also see the need to address the issue of ad hoc export control regimes, which act as barriers to the transfers of equipment and technology for peaceful purposes. We are conscious of the need to regulate transfers to prevent proliferation, but feel that this should be done through multilaterally negotiated universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory agreements.

We believe that SSOD IV should address all these issues pertaining to disarmament and international security in a comprehensive manner. We look forward at this session of the Disarmament Commission to working together with other delegations to try to reach consensus on the objectives of this special session and, if possible, on an agenda for the special session, which we believe is essential at this point in time.

We have two newish items on our agenda, and I use the word "newish" deliberately. The topic of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at is not a new issue. After three years of deliberations, the Disarmament Commission in 1993 adopted by consensus guidelines and recommendations for regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security. In these guidelines, there is an entire section on "Zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction". That consensus text recognized that the establishment of special zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at constitutes an important disarmament measure. However, it was also agreed that this was only an interim stage which could contribute to the attainment of the ultimate objective of achieving a world entirely free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

The nuclear-weapon-free zones, as they seek to enhance the security of all States involved, will have to encompass the full range of the security concerns of the countries involved. This would, *inter alia*, require a clear definition of the area to be covered by the zones, taking into account the specific features, including the geographic and geo-political characteristics, of the proposed zones, and would need to be initiated by the States of the proposed zone on the basis of prior consultations. India respects the right of every country to safeguard its security in a manner in which it deems appropriate and therefore respects those regional arrangements which are freely arrived at by the countries concerned, in keeping with the provisions of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly and the guidelines endorsed by the United Nations in 1993.

However, we would like to emphasize our view that nuclear-weapon-free zones are intrinsically partial measures of security. The factors of range, reach and radius of action of nuclear weapons, and therefore the implicit and explicit threat to areas affected by them, cannot be ignored. Nuclear weapons do not respect territorial or regional boundaries and they are not eliminated by such measures. We are concerned that such partial measures may give a false impression of progress in nuclear disarmament. The security of the world and its regions cannot rest on the decisions of a few countries that continue to hold these weapons of mass destruction and who insist that they need to retain these weapons for their security and that of their allies. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones can be meaningful only if simultaneous action can be taken by the international community on negotiations towards the elimination of the weapons concerned. We can only have a nuclear-weapon-free world and the security that goes with it if the weapons themselves are eliminated.

We do have a brand new item on our agenda relating to guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N. We participated in the consensus at the last session of the General Assembly on this resolution as we believe that the spread of small arms and light weapons is a matter of concern, since their use, particularly in situations of conflict and terrorism, can have a major adverse effect, negatively impacting on the social stability and therefore the security of the affected countries. We agree that there is a need to regulate and control the production and flow of such weapons. Greater transparency and accountability in the manufacture and transfer of such weapons may go some way in curbing their menace.

We are willing to work together with other delegations on discussing the scope of this item. We do not believe that we should be too restrictive in our approach. We need perhaps to look at the international arms trade in general to see how we could develop guidelines which could help States to harmonize national policies, including through the sharing of information, border controls, gun-control legislation and effective measures against the illegal possession and traffic in such deadly instruments. At the same time, we need to be cautious that we do not start discussing subjects being handled in other forums, whether in the Small Arms Expert Panel or in the Working Group on an Agenda for Peace.

We look forward to the discussions on all the agenda items before us and I can assure you of the fullest cooperation of my delegation in these endeavours.

Mr. Guillén (Peru) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me, on behalf of the delegation of Peru and personally, to offer our particular congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the post of Chairman of this Commission, and to the other members of the Bureau. We assure you of our delegation's full cooperation in your work towards the success of the Commission's work. I would also like to convey to Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann our congratulations for his important work last year.

After the exceptional situation this Commission experienced last year, we again have a complete agenda of work, which we should carry out in a serious, constructive way in the coming days. The important document adopted by this Commission at its substantive session last year with respect to arms transfers, with particular stress on illicit traffic, was a positive step with which the international community has moved to eradicate a tangible threat to the stability of legitimately constituted Governments and firmly to confront the drug traffickers and terrorists working in this illegal market to undermine democratic societies. Both of these illicit activities deserve to be rejected by the international community and States should cooperate in combating them.

Peru, a peace-loving nation and a staunch defender of international law as laid down in the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, feels that respect for the judicial obligations contracted by States is essential to the maintenance of international peace and security. We therefore urge other States to comply with their international obligations in good faith and with firm political will, taking into account the fact that peace is a direct consequence of full respect for international law.

The risk of nuclear disaster remains. Although this risk has been reduced by the disappearance of bipolar conflict, it has taken on new forms and presents new dangers. The need for general and complete disarmament is urgent and there can be no excuse for failing to move towards this objective.

A few weeks ago, we celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which is now supported by all the Latin American and Caribbean States and thus constitutes the first densely-populated nuclear-weapon-free zone. A few days ago, the Bangkok Treaty entered into force, establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia. We congratulate the States parties to this agreement for their important decision to reduce the nuclear threat. Together with the areas included in the Pelindaba Treaty in Africa, the Rarotonga Treaty in the South Pacific, the Antarctic Treaty, and the Treaties of Tlatelolco and Bangkok, a southern hemisphere free of these macabre arms has been achieved.

We regret that General Assembly resolution 51/45 B could not be adopted by consensus. The reasons put forward for this are not sufficiently justified and we interpret them as misunderstandings that we hope can be overcome in the future. The interest of other regions of the world in establishing areas free of these weapons of mass destruction is proof of the desire of peoples to eliminate this threat. The dangers of the use of such weapons are limited neither by frontiers nor by socio-economic conditions. We congratulate the decision of the signatories of the Almaty Declaration to establish a new nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. We must move forward firmly in this area, because in so doing we contribute to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, creating the necessary conditions for the complete elimination of the nuclear risk.

Over the past two years, the Commission has carried out an in-depth debate on the need to hold the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We should now demonstrate the decisive will to move forward in this area by making a realistic, responsible effort to establish clear, constructive guidelines.

Peru cosponsored the draft resolution submitted at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly on

practical disarmament measures that was adopted by consensus as resolution 51/45 N. We share the interest shown in developing in greater depth this subject of concrete and achievable usefulness. We feel that confidence-building among States, with a view to an international environment of peace and security, should be undertaken in a comprehensive way, leading eventually to a climate of mutual confidence.

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have adopted initiatives enabling their region to become one of the most active in efforts aimed at regional disarmament.

In December 1974, at the Ayacucho Summit in Peru, the Declaration of the same name was signed, through which precise common objectives were agreed upon with respect to the limitation of spending on conventional weapons and to confidence-building measures in South America. Subsequently, our country promoted a series of local and regional confidence-building measures. For nearly two decades, these initiatives have helped build much closer bilateral relationships based on a shared judicial framework and the adoption of concrete measures corresponding to the nature and level of relations. To that end, the States involved have maintained firm political determination and good faith — essential prerequisites for progress in such processes.

In this context, we feel that there are three elements which should be considered to strengthen this regional approach: the conditions and characteristics specific to each region; recognition of the varying regional progress made towards disarmament; and the specific nature of each regional situation.

In this context, Peru has attached the greatest importance to its obligations under the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Accordingly, since the Register's establishment, we have reported on all our acquisitions. However, we have observed with serious concern that many States have not complied with this commitment or that they have done so only in a tardy or partial way. They have thus hindered the achievement of the Register's main objective: the establishment of an up-to-date and complete Register.

Moreover, our delegation would point out that the Peruvian Government has always fully complied with its commitment to report publicly the required information on any military acquisitions, under the assumption that it is each sovereign country's responsibility, based on its conditions and characteristics, to decide on the release of such information.

We also cosponsored General Assembly resolution 51/45 S, which urged States to achieve as quickly as possible an agreement prohibiting the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. We feel that the initiative submitted by Canada in Ottawa in 1996 is of great urgency. We are ready to cooperate actively on it and with any other forums pursuing similar objectives.

The failure of States to comply with their obligations under duly formalized treaties and agreements cannot be unilaterally justified with respect to the use of weapons of mass destruction, which are excessively indiscriminate and destructive, do not distinguish among their victims and affect the environment. For the reasons stated, the delegation of Peru feels that the States that have acknowledged laying anti-personnel mines are responsible to the international community for their impact and obliged to remove and deactivate them promptly.

It is also necessary to stress on this occasion a consistent element of our foreign policy: the renunciation of the production and use of weapons of mass destruction. Arms reduction and the use of resources thus released should be oriented in a decisive way towards promoting comprehensive economic and social development.

We feel that the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, headquartered in Lima, is ready to contribute decisively to creating conditions conducive to achieving concrete results at the regional level and to serving as a means for disseminating the important achievements made to date. Specifically, this Centre should, for example, be ready to publicize the important development of nuclear-weapon-free zones, perhaps through a forum where all the existing views on the issue could be discussed informally.

In a few days, the Chemical Weapons Convention will enter into force. This is an instrument of particular importance in the search for a more secure international environment. We urge all States that are still not parties to the Convention, in particular those with significant capacities, to accede to the Convention soon.

Our peoples deserve a future of peace and security and we should contribute to achieving it.

Mr. McCook (Jamaica): On behalf of my delegation, I wish to congratulate you most warmly, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. I want also to add my warm personal congratulations to you in recognition of your skills, experience and expertise in the area of disarmament. My congratulations are also extended to the members of the Bureau and the Chairmen of the working groups.

I wish also to extend congratulations to Ambassador Hoffmann of Germany, who so ably guided the deliberations of the Commission during the last session.

My delegation is deeply committed to the goal of disarmament and the ongoing effort to deal effectively with the alarming proliferation of weapons of all types.

First of all, we recognize the critical importance of the effort to achieve the goal of full and complete nuclear disarmament. This must be an urgent and pressing priority for all members of the international community.

The extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1995, and the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996 are important steps in the pursuit of this goal. It is vitally important that the international community not squander the opportunity these developments provide for increasing the pace of disarmament. We should seize the moment and take further clear and constructive steps towards complete and verifiable nuclear disarmament.

While my delegation is deeply concerned about the problem of nuclear disarmament, at a practical level it is also convinced of the need for urgent and decisive action to curtail the illicit trafficking in small arms. This is of tremendous concern to small States such as my own, which are mounting a strong effort to address the serious problems caused by the illicit traffic in these deadly weapons, which often takes place in tandem with the illicit traffic in narcotics.

In this context, I wish to underline the section of last year's report of the Disarmament Commission, which stated:

> "All stages of illicit arms trafficking should be the focus of scrutiny. An essential factor in eradicating illicit arms trafficking is the effective control of arms to prevent them from being acquired by unauthorized persons." *(A/51/42, Annex, para. 12)*

In this regard, we urge all Member States, and arms-producing States in particular, to take note of the recommendation contained in resolution 46/36 H of the General Assembly, repeated in last year's report of the Disarmament Commission, in which Member States were urged to

> "harmonize, where appropriate, relevant laws, regulations and administrative procedures as well as their enforcement measures, with the goal of eradicating the illicit arms trade". *(resolution 46/36 H, para. 4)*

We further urge States to exercise greater diligence in the surveillance of exports to prevent illicit arms transfers. This would be similar to the kind of scrutiny that many States are obliged to undertake to curtail the illicit traffic in narcotics.

Every day, scores of persons far from the scenes of conflict or battle are killed by small arms, often hand guns, in the hands of criminals. Far more troubling is the level of sophistication of the weapons and the types of bullets available to these persons.

A long hard look must be taken at the cost to our societies of the unbridled access to guns which the criminal element seems to have. We must move decisively to stop them, in line with the recommendations mentioned in last year's report.

Producer States that feed the pipelines of the illicit trade in small arms, as well as receiving States into whose communities these small arms are funneled, must take further measures to stem this deadly tide. We hope that the discussions on this item in the Disarmament Commission will help us to deal more effectively with this pressing problem.

My delegation is also troubled by the problem posed by anti-personnel landmines. We have declared our commitment to the move to ban these destructive weapons, which maim and kill innocent men, women and children in alarming numbers every day and also render large tracts of land unsuitable for economic activity.It is a sad irony that, in many societies where peace has been achieved, these remnants of war remain as lethal reminders of its horrors.

We are committed to the effort to negotiate and conclude an agreement for the banning of these weapons, whose military use cannot be justified in the face of its

horrifying impact upon innocent civilians in conflict and post-conflict situations. We support the Ottawa 1997 initiative and initiatives in our hemispheric body, the Organization of American States, in this regard, and fervently hope that concrete steps will be made to conclude this important treaty.

As a long-standing party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, we recognize the importance of denying nuclear weapons a place in our military strategies and the arsenals of our region. We therefore welcome recently concluded agreements to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa and Asia and are heartened by the statements of commitment to pursuing a nuclear-weapon-free zone expressed by nations of Central Asia. We look forward to the successful conclusion of agreements for the establishment of further nuclear-weapon-free zones as important elements in the push for full and complete nuclear disarmament.

Let me once again assure you, Sir, of my delegation's full support as you guide us through the important work of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at this session. I am confident that, with your diplomatic skills and knowledge of disarmament and international security, our current deliberations will be led to a successful conclusion. I would also like to express my delegation's sincere gratitude to Ambassador Hoffmann, who conducted the proceedings of the Commission in 1996 in an exemplary manner. May I take this opportunity to extend my felicitations to the other members of the Bureau on their election.

In line with the primary responsibility of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, the role of the Commission in examining various issues and challenges relating to global and regional disarmament, in submitting recommendations and in promoting the implementation of relevant decisions of the tenth special session of the General Assembly is of great magnitude and relevance. It is thus a source of satisfaction that the Disarmament Commission has taken steps in the past few years to rationalize its work, thus enabling itself to deal more effectively and expeditiously with the challenges in this field.

We also note with satisfaction that the Commission succeeded in finalizing its work on guidelines for international arms transfers in the course of last year's discussions. The document that was produced, despite some shortcomings, is of great value and significance and will contribute substantively as a sound basis to our common efforts in this field.

This year, the Disarmament Commission will once again consider convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) — a significant topic which demands serious consideration by all States. My delegation is fully convinced that a high-level disarmament session before the turn of the century and the millennium can usefully take stock of the achievements of the international community in the areas of war prevention, disarmament and peace, and can accordingly set the agenda for the next century.

A special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and related security matters can effectively deal with such an agenda. No one should underestimate the far-reaching impact of the Final Document of the first special session devoted to disarmament (SSOD I) on the past two decades on nearly all activities in the sphere of disarmament and security-related issues. We concur with the view that SSOD IV should have a balanced agenda, taking into account the concerns of all States. However, the agenda is bound to focus on the priorities envisioned and underscored by SSOD I. Thus, every effort should be made to convene a new special session on disarmament in accordance with General Assembly resolution 51/45 C, bearing in mind a need for the adequate preparation that could make such a session a real success.

In this context, the current session of the Disarmament Commission is expected to engage in serious and constructive discussions on this issue, with a view to promoting convergent efforts aimed at substantive preparation for the special session. This could, among other things, spare us time and pave the way for the smooth functioning of the first preparatory meeting of SSOD IV, arranged for the second half of July this year. Our earnest expectation is that all members of the Commission will use their best efforts to finalize the discussions on this item and to conclude it by the end of the present session of the Commission.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is considered to be a first and necessary step towards the elimination of nuclear threat. The process of establishing such zones in some parts of the world where they do not

exist, such as in the Middle East, should be encouraged to promote non-proliferation and to contribute to the attainment of the objective of achieving a world entirely free of nuclear weapons.

In light of the constant support of the United Nations for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and the accession of all regional parties except for one to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), it is extremely necessary to take constructive and practical measures towards the realization of this goal. The reported possession by Israel of nuclear weapons and its refusal to accept NPT obligations and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards pose a grave destabilizing effect in the Middle East. The resolution of this problem is essential to diminishing the perception of nuclear threat in the region. Given the sensitivity of the Middle East, it is essential to direct all efforts towards making this region once and for all a zone free from any weapons of mass destruction.

We believe that, if we are to attain this objective, the Disarmament Commission is the proper forum in which to deliberate the issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones and to formulate guidelines and make recommendations with a view to establishing such zones in areas of high sensitivity, including the Middle East. To this end, assessment of the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones will be highly desirable if any practical measures are to be envisaged by the Disarmament Commission. This Commission is required to assess and identify the obstacles hindering the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

I should now like briefly to touch upon the item on the Commission's agenda entitled "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N". Controlling the flow of conventional arms is a part of disarmament efforts and, as an international problem, requires solutions based on international cooperation and a common approach. The Commission can therefore, within its mandate, play a constructive role by prescribing guidelines and highlighting areas of common effort and cooperation in this field. This should not, however, divert the attention of the United Nations from the issue of nuclear disarmament, which is broadly believed to be the first priority for the international community.

We hope that the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, in which our expert actively participates, will be able to make concrete recommendations, as a reliable and useful source for further consideration of this item by the Disarmament Commission.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reiterate that it will cooperate fully with the Commission to achieve its desired goals.

Mrs. Ortakova (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): Allow me at the outset to extend the warm congratulations of my delegation to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its present session. You will have our full support and cooperation, as will the members of the Bureau.

The disarmament agenda has always been an important subject for international cooperation. Any advance in this field, therefore, will have a positive effect on many aspects of international security. In this regard, we hope that this year's session of the Disarmament Commission will be productive and contribute to the disarmament process, which should proceed even more vigorously than in the past.

In the coming days, our Commission will discuss some basic questions on the disarmament agenda. In the opinion of my delegation, all of them are important. All States, nuclear and non-nuclear alike, are interested in the process of nuclear disarmament for the future. For most of us, the most important aspect is to see the results of the disarmament process, regardless of whether they are the consequence of bilateral or multilateral negotiations. It should be borne in mind that the majority of States do not fear nuclear war and are therefore interested in the achievement, as soon as possible, of the ultimate goals of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), so that we will be able to say that we are firmly moving in the direction of a world entirely free of nuclear weapons.

At the current session, great consideration will be given to the question of nuclear-weapon-free zones. The Republic of Macedonia has always supported the objectives of enlarging the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and of creating new zones and is therefore most interested in the Commission's thoroughly examining this particular aspect of nuclear disarmament and proposing to the General Assembly a credible platform acceptable to all States Members of the United Nations.

My delegation is particularly interested in all aspects of conventional arms control and disarmament. The results achieved to date by the international community in

this respect are useful, but we cannot be satisfied with them. In many regions, especially that in which my country is situated, there are immense quantities of conventional weapons of all kinds which, *per se*, destabilize the situation in the region. We support all efforts that are based on the principle that it is legitimate for each State to have sufficient weapons to defend itself. We believe, however, that any more can present a danger to security in the region. We therefore support the commencement of negotiations on an international convention aimed at the limitation of conventional weapons. The drafting process of such a convention could be an issue for negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament or in another multilateral body, such as our Commission.

It is important to start from a particular point. Perhaps it would be most useful for our Commission to start by formulating a general view of the substance of the convention. The entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention, together with the drafting of a convention on the limitation of conventional weapons, will surely lead towards a more secure world.

At the present session, the Commission will discuss the item on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. My delegation is of the view that the time has come to hold such a session and believes that, if it does take place, it is very important that one of the agenda items be an international instrument for the limitation of conventional weapons.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan) (*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you warmly on behalf of the delegation of Azerbaijan on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for the current session. I also congratulate other members of the Bureau. We are confident that, under your leadership, the Disarmament Commission will achieve important results. All members of the Bureau will be able to rely upon the full cooperation of the delegation of Azerbaijan. We are also very grateful to Ambassador Hoffmann, Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at last year's session, for his important contribution to its success.

Now, on the eve of the next millennium, we have great responsibilities, among which the task of defining and mapping out the key parametres of the new international order is of great importance. It is clear that that order must take into account the interests of all States and guarantee equality with regard to their security. In the recent past, we have achieved important results, in particular the extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the accession of many States to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

With regard to the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, I should like to note with satisfaction that the significance of such zones, which are among the most important elements of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, is becoming increasingly apparent and urgent. The eminently practical effectiveness of the Treaties of Pelindaba, Tlatelolco and Rarotonga is testimony to the need to step up international efforts in that direction.

Another topical question is the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. There are many views and approaches, some of which are quite contradictory. One thing remains clear: the special session must bear real fruit. It must give a powerful and positive impetus to the disarmament process on the eve of the next millennium. The agenda of the special session should contain balanced — I repeat, balanced — items on the issues of nuclear disarmament, weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. In our view, this would be fully in keeping with the various, differing military situations throughout the world.

The problem of disarmament has become one aspect of the efforts of the international community to consolidate international peace, settle disputes and crises and create a new security model for the world. This problem is presently extremely relevant to the European situation, the keystone of which is the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. Following the end of the cold war and the abandonment of the policy of blocs, it began to be understood that the security of States should be equal and that the security of one State cannot be guaranteed at the expense of others. Unfortunately, the solutions now being proposed to the so-called flank problems within the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe do not fulfil these criteria.

Azerbaijan cannot base its security on such solutions. A statement was made in this respect on behalf of Azerbaijan and of a number of other States in the negotiations on the adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which were held in Vienna on 8 and 15 April 1997. Unfortunately, the situation has been aggravated by the presence in our region of weapons not subject to control and by the illegal supply of weapons to Armenia which have

assumed considerable proportions. However, Azerbaijan attaches great importance to the Treaty and holds the constructive position that it is prepared to pursue an in-depth dialogue aimed at achieving solutions acceptable to all the parties.

Allow me in conclusion to express my certainty that this session of the Disarmament Commission will lead to sound results and mark an important step in the process of disarmament, especially since we have important, interesting and serious work to do on the question of guidelines on conventional arms control/limitations and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N, in addition to the questions I have mentioned.

Mr. Onanga-Anyanga (Gabon) (*interpretation from French*): It is truly a pleasure for my delegation to convey its congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of this session of the Disarmament Commission. Your skills and mastery of disarmament issues are unanimously recognized and are a solid foundation for the success of our work, as indeed were those of Ambassador Hoffmann of Germany at the last session. We also reiterate our congratulations to him.

We asked to speak simply to express our delegation's interest in the deliberations of the Disarmament Commission, which is a prominent forum for international consultation on arms limitation and disarmament. At this session, the Disarmament Commission will begin its consideration of two new items that are vital to the advancement of general and complete disarmament. It will attempt to harmonize views with regard to the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of agreements freely entered into.

In this connection, my delegation is convinced that the present international climate should encourage regions that have not yet done so to establish new nuclear-weapon-free zones as soon as possible. These new zones, when created, would complement the efforts being made in other parts of the world to hasten the process of the complete denuclearization of the planet.

My delegation believes that the progress to be made at this session on the delicate question of nuclear-weapon-free zones might lay the groundwork for more important advances at the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In this regard, my delegation remains convinced that the holding of this special session is necessary in order to take stock of disarmament and arms limitation efforts undertaken by the international community during the last 50 years and to set future goals that will allow mankind to be rid of all weapons of mass destruction as we approach the next century.

We are convinced that, under your leadership, Sir, all delegations will show the necessary goodwill for the achievement of consensus on this important question, especially with regard to the convening of the Preparatory Committee for the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

My delegation is also convinced that the Commission will address item 6 of its agenda on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitations and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N in an effort to seek agreement. In our opinion, this would be the best way of paying tribute to the German delegation for the excellent work it has done in specific regard to resolution 51/45 N, entitled "consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures".

As a sponsor of that important resolution, my delegation wishes to make its small contributions to the deliberations of Working Group III in order to insure that, as of this session, the Commission can make decisive progress for the adoption of guidelines on conventional arms control/limitations and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace, as was the case at last year's session with the adoption of guidelines on the illicit trafficking in conventional weapons.

Organizational matters

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): As members are aware, the election of two Vice-Chairmen from the Group of African States and two from the Group of Eastern European States remains pending, along with the appointment of the Chairmen of Working Group I, on agenda item 4, and of Working Group II, on agenda item 5.

I have been informed by the Chairman of the Group of Eastern European States that the Group has nominated Belarus and Romania as Vice-Chairmen of the Disarmament Commission for 1997.

Accordingly, if there is no objection, I shall take it that the Disarmament Commission wishes to elect by acclamation Belarus and Romania as Vice-Chairmen of the Commission.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.